

BONES

Continued from B1 6-29-00

a steep dirt road, walk across rangeland and into forests, hike through gullies, scramble on rock ledges and climb towering gravelly hills. The dig is at 8,500 feet elevation.

For most of the excavation, which started on June 1, volunteers helped with the hard work of pickaxe and shovel to burrow through a slope of mudstone and sandstone. But this day, the volunteers were helping at another site.

The potential *T. rex* bones were emerging from a pit about 20 feet by 8 feet. Overburden removed varied from a few inches to 6 feet deep.

"We moved several tons of rock," said Getty.

In the early or middle 1990s, a geology graduate student and a technician from the geology department were in the region studying the ancient sediments. The student had car trouble. Mean-

while, the technician looked around the hills and noticed fossils.

"There were a few bones eroding out, broken up on the surface," Getty said. Later, bones were collected from the surface.

"They went in a little bit to the hill and just got the ones which were near the surface," he added. "Because the bones were very large, they thought it was a sauropod."

Sauropods were huge plant-eating dinosaurs of the type that comes to mind if someone says *Brontosaurus*. A giant sauropod called *Alamasaurus*, dating to the same period, had been discovered "very close to the site . . . and they thought it was that."

But Jim Madsen, the former state paleontologist, recognized the bones as a theropod, a meat-eater. Scott Sampson, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the museum, studied a skull fragment and realized it had the same distinctive bulge behind the eye socket that *T. rex* had.

Also, the vertebrae have a shape

typical of those of theropods, not shared by plant-eaters.

"It is either *Tyrannosaurus rex* or it's something that hasn't been described," Sampson said in a telephone interview from his office.

"I can say with confidence that it falls within the size range of the largest *Tyrannosaurus*. We're talking about a very large, multi-ton animal that without doubt was the dominant carnivore of that time."

Another meat-eater, the *Allosaurus*, is relatively common in Utah. But it is from an earlier period called the Jurassic.

By strata studies, scientists know this fossil is from the last of the Cretaceous era, 65 million years ago, when the age of the dinosaurs ended. The only large North American carnivore known from that period is the *T. rex*. So it's either that or some new monster just as ferocious.

Once paleontologists realized they had an important find, they obtained an excavation permit and Getty led the dig.

As he helped chart the location of a bulging vertebra, Loewen said

he hopes they will find more than the 40 bones and fragments already uncovered.

"I like to reconstruct in my mind what it was like back then, but mostly while I'm digging, it's just like digging treasure," Loewen added. "You never know what you're going to uncover."

Many of the bones were eroded by underground "pipes," natural tunnels where water percolated through the formation. Others are better preserved.

"We really are not sure what we'll find in this site," Getty said. Possibly many more bones are in the hillside, but it's also possible that most have been eroded away.

They pack burlap-and-plaster jackets around the specimens, so they will be safe when shipped to the U.

Getty said he often thinks about what life was like here, 65 million years ago.

"It's totally, 100 percent, different than it was at the time this animal would have been walking around here. This would have been a coastal plain lowland area with

subtropical sorts of vegetation, most likely. And now it's an exposure of dry, semiarid outcrop in a high mountainous area."

So far, they have uncovered bones from the head, pelvis, tail, feet, legs and ribs. One jacket covered a pair of vertebrae that were still connected, weighing 80 pounds.

How will he get it out? "On my back," said Getty.

Even individual bones are heavy. "This is a very large individual. Every bone we've seen has shown us it's a very large individual," he said.

Most of the cleaning, study and reconstruction will take place at the museum's lab, located on the U. campus.

"To me, it's kind of a privilege," working on the site, Getty said. "You know, whatever this is, it's very important."

This will be the first large meat-eating dinosaur from this period ever found in Utah, he marveled. "It's pretty exciting to be involved."

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last year, or that he had to work extra jobs — including managing several newspaper routes — to raise his six children.

“As soon as I started teaching, I realized that there was really nothing I liked better,” he says. “My wife and I were both pretty shocked when we saw that first paycheck. But it’s been a great joy to watch my students grow and progress.”

Not only was the pay lousy (and most teachers would say it still is), Earle had to wear a dress shirt and tie each day when he first started on the job. Today, he’s more comfortable in khaki slacks and a golf shirt — attire that’s more appropriate for last-minute games of kick soccer on the playground.

When he cleans out his desk this afternoon, his last day on the job, Earle will no doubt have mixed feelings about his permanent summer vacation. He says he will miss the daily routine except for one thing: “I won’t have to remember everybody’s name on the first day of school,” he says with a smile. “You deal with all sorts of things as a teacher. But *that* was a challenge.”

Have a story? Let’s hear it over lunch. E-mail your name, phone number and what’s on your mind to freelunch@desnews.com or send a fax to 466-2851. You can also write me at the Deseret News, P.O. Box 1257, Salt Lake City, UT 84110.

By Jennifer Dobner
Deseret News staff writer

A person born in 1900 was expected to live only to age 49. On Wednesday, Utah recognized the men and women who proved the statisticians wrong, living to age 100 and beyond.

“They are really here dispelling a myth that when you get old, you get sick, infirm and useless,” said Sheldon Elman, assistant director of the state’s office of aging and adult services.

State officials believe there are some 300 centenarians in Utah. About 40 of them and their families gathered at the Governor’s Mansion to be honored with pins and hugs from Gov. Mike Leavitt and his son, Westin, who was a last-minute stand-in for his mother, Jackie. It is the 14th year the state has honored its centenarians.

“I think it’s amazing that they could be 100,” said the junior Leavitt, who at 10 said he thinks age 60 is “old.”

“This is the fourth year I’ve done this with my dad,” Westin



Florence Allison, 104, shares a laugh with Gov. Mike Leavitt at the Governor’s Mansion. About 40 centenarians attended the luncheon.

said. “I just love doing it. They’re really nice.”

But those centenarians on hand would tell the young man that you’re only as old as you feel. And as long as you’re not in too much pain and can still do some of the things you enjoy, it feels pretty good.

The oldest in attendance Wednesday were Clearfield resident Bee R. Fisher, 106, and Kenneth Burnett, 105, a lifetime resident of Sugar House. Women centenarians

out-numbered the men 3-to-1.

“The secret to it is what you put in here,” Burnett said, pointing to his mouth. “Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. I have never yet smoked a cigarette or taken any alcoholic beverages, and I get along all right.”

Better than all right, said his daughter, Louise Greco, 62, who shares her Highland Park home with her dad. Burnett, she said, is a voracious reader — without

Please see **CENTENARIAN** on B2

the nation’s biggest loser over the past decade when it came to how much the federal government spends in state compared with how much federal tax its residents pay.

In 1989, Utahns received \$1.45 in federal spending for every \$1 they paid in federal

Police arrest woman

**By Derek Jensen
and Brady Snyder**
Deseret News staff writers

SANDY — Police have arrested a man in connection with the murder of a Sandy day-care provider who was found dead in her home early Wednesday morning.

Sandy police arrested the woman’s son, Farid Baruque, 26, late Wednesday night and booked him into jail after questioning him and several other